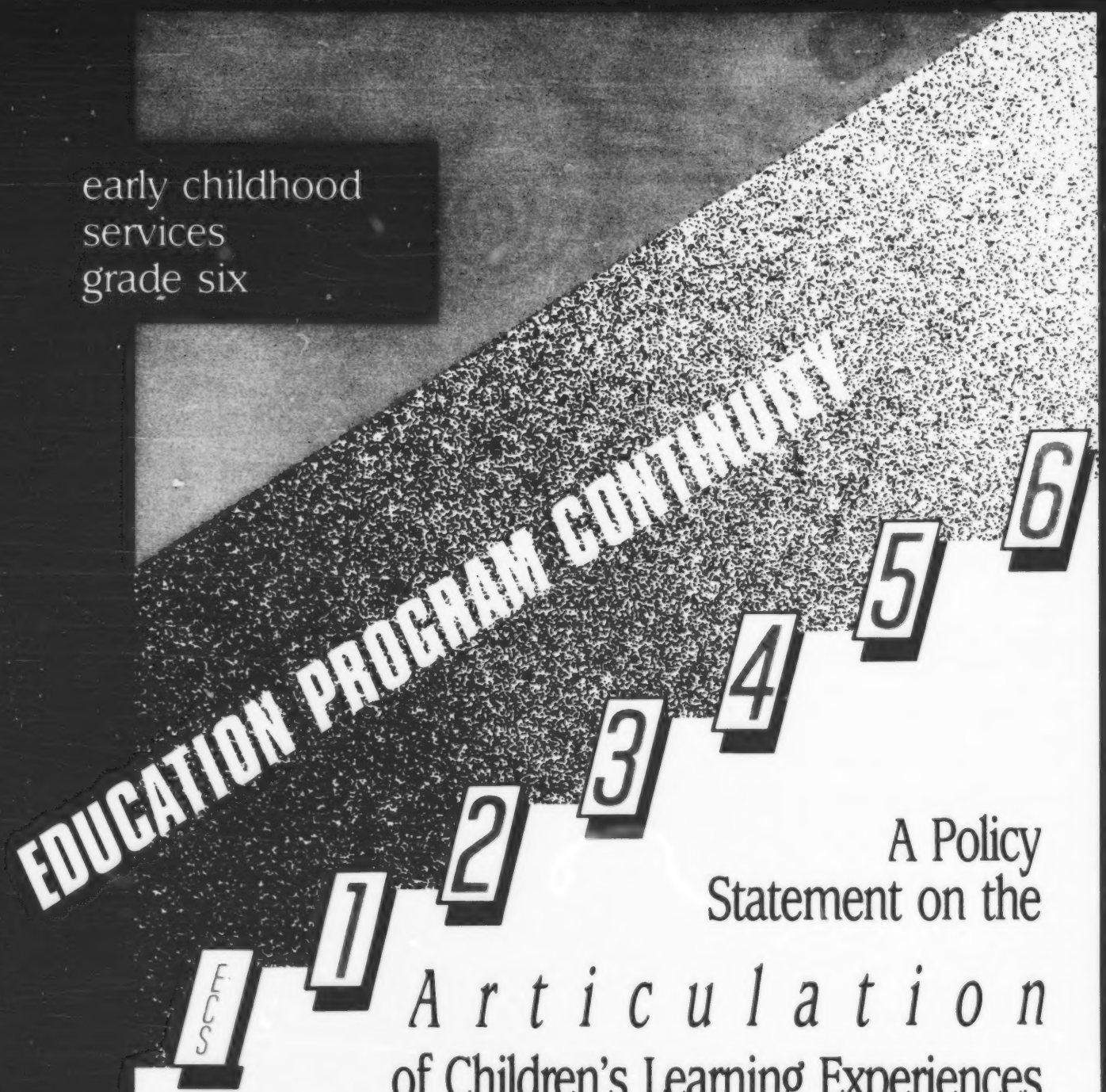
early childhood
services
grade six



A Policy Statement on the *Articulation* of Children's Learning Experiences

MARCH

1988

Alberta
EDUCATION

Table of Contents

	Page
Message from the Minister	3
Definition	5
An Introductory Comment	5
Background	6
Reasons for a Policy on Education Program Continuity	8
The Policy	9
Policy Implementation	9
Principles of Child Development	10
Comprehensive Program Specifications	11
Comprehensive Program Dimensions	11
Shared Education Program Decisions	12
Strategies for Instruction	13
Strategies for Evaluation	13
Administration of Program Continuity	13
Course of Action	14
Questions on Education Program Continuity	15
Further Reading	17
Enquiries and Comments	18

Alberta. Alberta Education.

Education program continuity: a policy statement on the articulation of children's learning experiences: early childhood services through grade six.

ISBN 0-7732-0051-7

1. Articulation (Education) -- Alberta. 2. Education -- Alberta -- Curricula. 3. Education, Primary -- Alberta. 4. Education, Elementary -- Alberta. I. Title.

LB1507.A333 1988 372.12

Alberta
EDUCATION

Office of the Minister

130 Legislature Building, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T5K 2B6 403/427-2025

On behalf of the Government of Alberta, I would like to thank all those Albertans who participated in the development of policy on the continuity in children's learning experiences in Early Childhood Services through Grade six education programs.

I am confident that this emphasis on education program continuity will assist all partners in the process of planning, delivering and evaluating learning experiences designed to meet the unique educational needs of preschool and elementary children.

Nancy Betkowski

Nancy Betkowski

DEFINITION

Education program continuity is a process which guarantees the articulation of children's learning experiences; a process accomplished through ongoing cooperative development, implementation and evaluation of Early Childhood Services (ECS) through Grade six education programs; a process carried out by a team of instructional staff, program administrators, parents and community resource persons; a process always undertaken in the best interests of children and in keeping with principles of child development.

AN INTRODUCTORY COMMENT

All children require learning experiences which are continuous, sequential and accomplished through a balance between learning activities which are achieved independently and those which occur in small and large group settings. Continuity in learning is enhanced by:

- learning and achievement objectives which lead, one from the other, logically, sequentially and in a form which can be easily adapted to meet the needs of children
- instructional techniques which
  - enable learners to interact with each other
  - respect the educational needs of each child
  - permit each child to function in accordance with preferred modes/strategies of learning
- a wide variety of methods used to evaluate children's progress
- flexible administrative practices carried out through a partnership among instructional staff, program administrators, parents and community resource persons.

BACKGROUND

Prior to 1973, the elementary school program did not include a preschool experience for children. A variety of private operators and, in some cases, school boards offered preschool education which was not provincially funded.

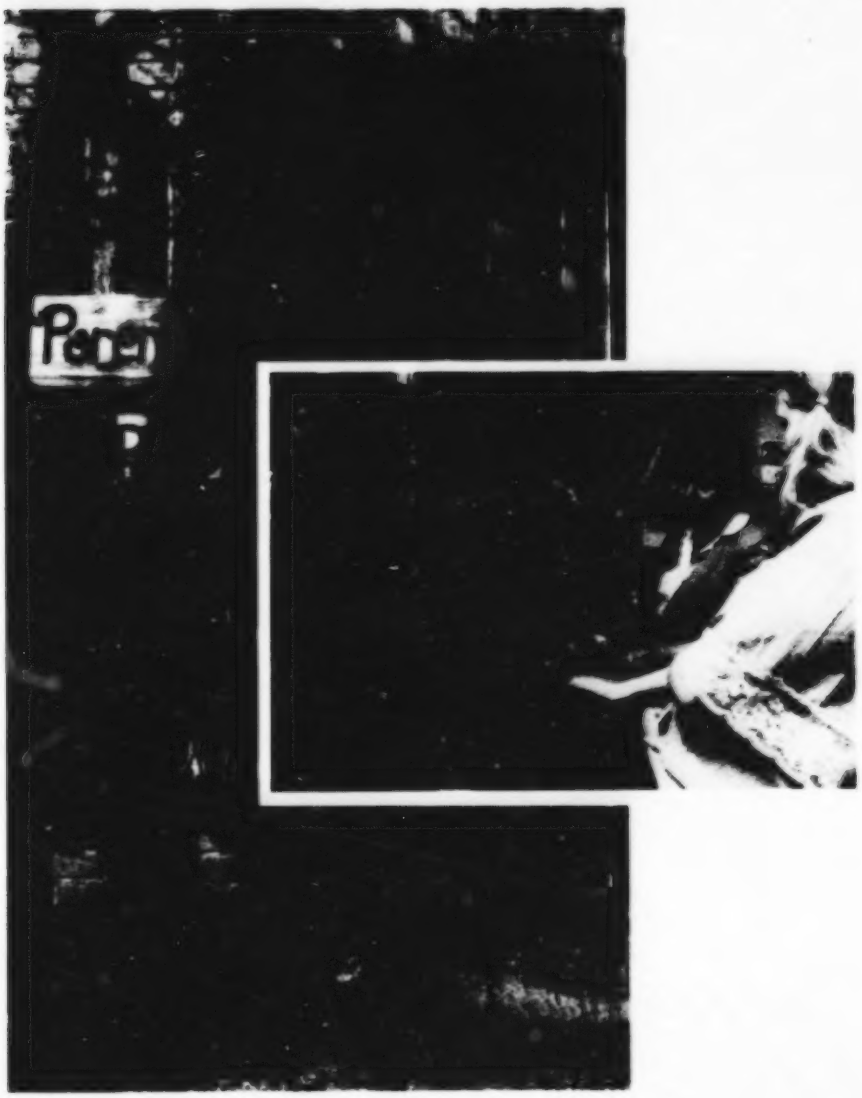
In September, 1973, the Early Childhood Services (ECS) program began to provide publicly financed preschool education administered by school boards, some private schools and many incorporated non-profit societies all of which initiated ECS programs voluntarily.

The ECS program is a voluntary preschool education opportunity offered to eligible children by school boards, Category 1 and 2 private schools and private ECS operators. ECS program plans are locally-developed on the basis of the handbook, *Early Childhood Services, Philosophy, Goals and Program Dimensions*.

Concepts such as extensive parent and community involvement, regional coordination of services and differentiated staffing were key promotional features. The ECS Branch developed, implemented, expanded and evaluated the program in relative independence from the elementary education program for children in Grades one through six.

Elementary education (Grades one through six) is a mandatory program offered by school boards and Category 1 and 2 private schools. Elementary education is based on objectives set out in the *Program of Studies for Elementary Schools* and carried out through locally-developed instructional activities.

In the spring of 1987, Alberta Education re-organization included the merger of Early Childhood Services and Elementary Education. This is a significant directional undertaking for the Department and supports the importance of providing children with continuity in learning experiences.



REASONS FOR A POLICY ON EDUCATION PROGRAM CONTINUITY

A directional statement on ECS through Grade six education program continuity is important because:

- the Early Childhood Services (ECS) program continues to play an important role in the development of children's concepts, skills and attitudes prior to Grade one; the functions of the former ECS Branch have been assumed by various branches in all three divisions of Alberta Education and the handbook, *Early Childhood Services Philosophy, Goals and Program Dimensions*, will be a significant factor in the merger of the ECS and Grades one through six programs into an ECS through Grade six program of studies;

- the Elementary Program Coordinating Committee will assume leadership responsibility for directions in ECS through Grade six program development;

- Alberta Education emphasizes the importance and impact of child development principles, research and theory in the development of learning resources for students and instructional resources for teachers;

- Alberta Education is placing emphasis upon the student in several initiatives which include the emerging new *School Act*, *Alberta Education Core Values* and the *Developmental Framework*; and

- there is growing interest in the integration of subjects, integrated instruction and the individualization of education programs in accordance with children's needs.

THE POLICY

Alberta Education, in cooperation with school boards, Category 1 and 2 private schools and private Early Childhood Services (ECS) program operators, will ensure continuity in children's ECS through Grade six learning experiences which are consistent with principles of child development.

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Eight considerations are included in recommended guidelines:

- Principles of Child Development
- Comprehensive Program Specifications
- Comprehensive Program Dimensions
- Shared Education Program Decisions
- Strategies for Instruction
- Strategies for Evaluation
- Administration of Program Continuity
- Course of Action

PRINCIPLES OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Principles of child development are commonly-held statements on which researchers, educators, parents and others base their relationships with children. Such statements provide direction in nurturing, guiding and educating children through a balanced emphasis on social, emotional, physical, creative, intellectual and moral development in ECS through Grade six education programs.

Although there are many principles which may influence events in the lives of children, three areas have been singled out in this statement:

- POSITIVE SELF-CONCEPT

  This principle is essential in every child's successful interaction with peers, adults and the environments in which learning occurs.

- LANGUAGE AND THINKING SKILLS

  Many principles underlie every child's successful acquisition and use of language and thinking skills. These principles are closely interrelated and, together, provide the avenue through which a child receives, processes and expresses an understanding of what occurs in the learning environment.

- PARENT INVOLVEMENT

  The principle of direct parent involvement in all activities related to their children's education programs is especially significant in ECS through Grade six learning experiences.

Other principles of child development may be derived, for instance, from *Students' Thinking: Developmental Framework/Cognitive Domain* (Alberta Education, March 1987), the first of four key child development statements to be used in education program development and by teachers as a basis for classroom instruction.

COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM SPECIFICATIONS

Education program specifications for ECS through Grade six should reflect balanced emphasis on the developmental needs of children, the expectations of society and the content and structure of the subject areas which are specified in the handbook, *Early Childhood Services Philosophy, Goals and Program Dimensions*, and in the *Program of Studies for Elementary Schools*.

COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM DIMENSIONS

ECS through Grade six education programs will provide balanced emphasis on the social, emotional, physical, creative, intellectual and moral development of children in accordance with *Early Childhood Services Philosophy, Goals and Program Dimensions* and the *Program of Studies for Elementary Schools*.

SHARED EDUCATION PROGRAM DECISIONS

There is a progression from provincial to local responsibility for the establishment of education program goals, learning objectives and instructional strategies:

- PROGRAM GOALS

  Alberta Education will continue to formulate the broad education program goals for children in ECS through Grade six on the basis of children's developmental needs, principles of child development and the expectations of society reflected in content and structure of the subject areas.

- LEARNING OBJECTIVES

  Alberta Education will formulate learning objectives for children in ECS through Grade six taking into account the need for greater flexibility in the early years and greater specificity in the later years.

- INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

  School boards, Category 1 and 2 private schools and private ECS operators will continue to determine instructional means for the delivery for ECS through Grade six education programs. Alberta Education will continue to provide learning resources for children and instructional resources for teachers. Alberta Education will also assist in the coordination of teacher inservice which is planned, implemented and evaluated locally.

STRATEGIES FOR INSTRUCTION

School boards, Category 1 and 2 private schools and private ECS operators are encouraged to provide every ECS through Grade six child with an education program through instructional strategies which are consistent with principles of child development and an emphasis upon integrated instruction. Some of these strategies are elaborated in:

- Alberta Education curriculum guides such as the ones for elementary language arts, mathematics and science;
- the 1986 ACCESS NETWORK videotape entitled, *Learning*; and
- *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth through Age 8 Expanded Version*. Edited by Sue Bredekamp. National Association for the Education of Young Children, Washington, D.C. (1987). ISBN 0-935989-11-0.

STRATEGIES FOR EVALUATION

ECS through Grade six children's educational progress is presently evaluated through means which are designed and controlled by classroom teachers, schools and/or school systems. In addition to locally determined assessment practices, Alberta Education administers provincial achievement tests at the end of Grades three and six. Local discretionary use is also made of a variety of standardized instruments such as the *Canadian Test of Basic Skills* and a variety of intelligence tests. Irrespective of the type of assessment used, school boards, Category 1 and 2 private schools and private ECS operators are encouraged to use principles of child development as primary guidelines for evaluation strategies used to assess the overall effectiveness of ECS through Grade six education programs and individual progress made by each child.

ADMINISTRATION OF PROGRAM CONTINUITY

- Instructional staff, principals, other program administrators, parents and community resource persons will ensure that children move from one stage of their education program to another in accordance with individual needs, individual abilities and appropriateness of learning environments. Therefore, effective program continuity will depend on a dynamic partnership based on shared decision-making which reflects the needs of children.
- All education program administration procedures, including assessment, enrolment and appeal requirements, should ensure that special needs children have access to learning experiences which are equitable to those of children with normal needs.

COURSE OF ACTION

Alberta Education, school boards, private schools and private ECS operators will jointly begin the following course of action in 1988 scheduled for completion by August 31, 1993; all activities will be supported within existing grant structures and jurisdictional budgets:

- Alberta Education will, in consultation with school boards, Category 1 and 2 private schools and private ECS operators, review *Early Childhood Services Philosophy, Goals and Program Dimensions* and the *Program of Studies for Elementary Schools* to identify discontinuities and/or incompatibilities and, subsequently, combine the documents to ensure that they adhere to the policy on education program continuity and principles of child development.

- Alberta Education will develop inservice materials including a handbook on education program continuity designed to meet the needs of program administrators, instructional staff, parents, community resource persons, school board members and other officials who are responsible for ECS through Grade six education programs.

- Alberta Education, through its network of Regional Offices, will:

  - provide information, inservice and other advice to assist school trustees, school superintendents, school administrators, instructional staff, parents and community resource persons in reviewing and understanding principles of child development, varied and flexible instructional techniques, program planning strategies and evaluation procedures which will assist in the continuity of children's education programs;

  - assist school boards, Category 1 and 2 private schools and private ECS operators in the development of policies, guidelines and procedures which ensure that children will experience education program continuity; and

  monitor the implementation of policies, guidelines and procedures developed by school boards, Category 1 and 2 private schools and private ECS operators to ensure continuity in children's learning experiences.

- School boards, Category 1 and 2 private schools, and private ECS operators will:

  - review and/or develop policies, guidelines and procedures which provide for continuity in education programs offered to children from ECS through Grade six; and

  - provide inservice to assist instructional staff, principals, other program administrators, parents and community resource persons in the implementation of policies, guidelines and procedures which ensure continuity in education programs for children in ECS through Grade six.

QUESTIONS COMMONLY ASSOCIATED WITH THE POLICY ON EDUCATION PROGRAM CONTINUITY

Q. Is the implementation of the policy on the continuity of ECS through Grade six education programs mandatory?

A. Not immediately. The degree to which any jurisdiction implements the policy is discretionary until August 31, 1993 when every school board, Category 1 and 2 private schools and private ECS operators will have policy, guidelines and procedures in place.

Q. Why does the policy on education program continuity span only ECS through Grade six?

A. Grades seven through twelve have been the focus of an extensive secondary education review. Many of the guidelines in the policy on education program continuity are compatible with the Policy on Secondary Education; as well, the monograph entitled, *Transition to Secondary Schooling* (August, 1987) provides necessary linkage between Grade six and Grade seven.

Q. How many child development principles are there? Where can the principles be found?

A. There is not a set number of child development principles. A wide variety of child development principles can be found in current literature on children, their interaction with one another and their relationships with adults. One source of information is the series of four monographs under the main title, *Development Framework*, published by Alberta Education. Two of these documents are available from the Learning Resources Distributing Centre.

Q. What effect will the policy on education program continuity have on the preparation of teachers?

A. The policy, guidelines and procedures should be shared with all prospective teachers whose courses should, at the conclusion of the program, provide ample opportunity to investigate, plan and practise techniques which will assist them in meeting children's individual educational needs. Subject integration, flexible instructional strategies and attention to the ways in which children learn should also be features of teacher preparation programs.

Q. Wouldn't the policy be easier to implement if Early Childhood Services were made compulsory for all school boards to offer?

A. Bill 59 (the proposed *School Act*) mentions Early Childhood Services as a program for which the Minister of Education may make regulations. Public input into the framework for the new *Act* suggested that the ECS program should be left alone because of its success over a fifteen-year period; approximately 97% of all eligible children attend an ECS program. The new *Act* will continue to support voluntary establishment of ECS programs, voluntary attendance and provision of programs by both private and public operators.

Q. **Is articulation a new program?**

A. No. In fact, articulation is not a program at all; it is a dispositon or attitude towards teaching children in flexible ways and involving other colleagues, parents, school administrators and community resource persons. The whole idea behind articulation is to ensure that children will experience continuity in learning as they move from one program year to another.

Q. **Is an ECS Diploma necessary for success in articulated teaching?**

A. An ECS Diploma is considered to be an asset because it signifies some teacher preparation which emphasizes children's needs, flexible teaching practices and cooperative relationships among teachers, parents, school administrators, community resource persons and, most important of all, children. As all ECS through Grade six educators become more knowledgeable about the developmental needs of children, such specialized certification will become less necessary.

Q. **Does the policy on education program continuity mean that all instruction has to be individualized?**

A. The policy suggests that all children require learning experiences which are continuous, sequential and accomplished through a balance between learning activities which are achieved independently and those which occur in small and large group settings. If a child requires special attention, appropriate individualized instruction may be provided.

Q. **Isn't the policy on education program continuity contradicted by the presence of Grade three and Grade six achievement tests?**

A. If achievement tests are used for the purposes outlined in the *Student Achievement Testing Program Bulletin*, there should be no contradiction. According to the *Bulletin*, page 2,

"The Achievement Testing Program provides Alberta Education, school jurisdictions, and the public with information significant at the provincial and local levels about student knowledge, understanding, and skills in relation to program objectives. This program is not intended to provide information to be used for student placement or promotion."

FURTHER READING

1. The following documents are available through written request to Central Support Services, Alberta Education, 8th Floor, West Devonian Building, 11160 Jasper Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta, T5K 0L2:

   Articulation Linkages: Children and Parents in Early/Basic Education (1983)

   Bridges to Learning: A Guide to Parent Involvement (1986)

   Early Childhood Services Philosophy, Goals and Program Dimensions (1984)

   Human Development: The Early Years (1984)

   Program Highlights (ISSN 0708-3196)

   - Learning: The Inside Story (Spring, 1987)
   - Learning Styles (October-November, 1986)
   - Parents as Partners in Education (September-October, 1986)
   - A Place for Kids (May-June, 1986)
   - Observing Children (April, 1986)
   - Articulation: Networking (January-February, 1986)

   Program of Studies for Elementary Schools

   Transition to secondary schooling: a Monograph of Ideas for Principals and Teachers (August, 1987) ONE COPY PER REQUEST

2. The following documents are available through written request to the Learning Resources Distributing Centre, 12360 - 142 Street, Edmonton, Alberta, T5L 4X9:

   - Students' Thinking: Developmental Framework/Cognitive Domain (March, 1987)
   - Students' Interactions: Developmental Framework/Social Sphere (March, 1988)

ENQUIRIES AND COMMENTS

Anyone who wishes to obtain more information about the policy on education program continuity may do so by contacting one of the Regional Offices of Education, the Curriculum Design Branch or the Curriculum Support Branch. Addresses and telephone numbers are:

Calgary Regional Office of Education
Room 1200, Rocky Mountain Plaza
615 Macleod Trail, S.E.
Calgary, Alberta
T2G 4T8 Telephone: 297-6353

Edmonton Regional Office of Education
8th Floor, Harley Court
10045 - 111 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
T5K 1K4 Telephone: 427-2952

Grande Prairie Regional Office of Education
5th Floor, Nordic Court
10014 - 99 Street
Grande Prairie, Alberta
T8V 3N4 Telephone: 538-5130

Lethbridge Regional Office of Education
Provincial Building
200 - 5th Avenue, South
Lethbridge, Alberta
T1J 4C7 Telephone: 381-5243

Red Deer Regional Office of Education
3rd Floor, West, Provincial Building
4920 - 51 Street
Red Deer, Alberta
T4N 6K8 Telephone: 340-5262

Curriculum Design Branch
Alberta Education
3rd Floor, Edwards Professional Building
10053 - 111 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
T5K 2H8 Telephone: 427-2984

Curriculum Support Branch
Alberta Education
5th Floor, East Tower, Devonian Building
11160 Jasper Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
T5K 0L2 Telephone: 422-4872